

February 11, 1997

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SUBJECT: **Deputy Secretary's Focus Report**

The following is a brief summary of Department of Transportation events and items of interest from the past month:

### **OPERATIONAL ITEMS:**

#### **EASTERN REGION DEVELOPS ROAD REPORT PHONE LINE**

To assist motorists during winter weather driving, the Eastern Region WSDOT created a regional telephone road report as a pilot project. This new Snow Line number covers conditions on major state highways in Northeast Washington. This recording is in addition to the statewide pass report that is already available.

Major highway sections in the recorded report are: Interstate 90 from the Grant/Adams County line to Spokane, Interstate 90 from Spokane to the Idaho border, U.S. 2 from the Grant/Lincoln County Line to Spokane, U.S. 2 from Spokane to Newport, U.S. 195 from Pullman to Spokane, U.S. 395 from the Franklin/Adams county line to Ritzville, and U.S. 395 from Spokane to Colville. These sections are the heaviest traveled in the WSDOT/Eastern Region.

The recording is updated, when needed, during the day, seven days per week. The new number is a local Spokane call ((509) 324-6046) and regular long-distance charges apply to callers outside the Spokane dialing area.

The new road condition report was put into service due to numerous requests by citizens as a result of the early winter storms over the last couple of months. The WSDOT will evaluate this new service after the 1997 winter driving season and look at the feasibility of making the program permanent.

#### **DEER INCIDENTS INCREASE WITH HARSH WINTER WEATHER**

Heavy snow levels in the rural areas of the Eastern Region are bringing more deer to lower elevations in search for food and water. This is causing conflicts with deer and motor vehicles on state highways. Eastern Region Maintenance Area 4 in the Colville area has seen a sharp increase in deer kills compared to last year. November and December of 1995 had a kill of 39. The same time frame for 1996 had a kill of 84.

#### **SR 129 REOPENS TO TRAFFIC**

SR 129 between Anatone and the Oregon border was reopened to traffic on January 30th after being closed since January 1st due to high water, mudslides, and washouts. The roadway was washed out in three places between the Grande Ronde River and the Oregon border. At the first washout, about 300 feet of roadway was lost. The second washout took about 100 feet of roadway. At the third washout, the roadway was only washed over to the shoulder area, but for several hundred feet. The mudslides filled several ditches and plugged drainage structures. An emergency contract was awarded to Steelman Duff of Clarkston. The repair work is complete, except for paving, which will be done the first week of February, weather permitting.

### **SNOQUALMIE PASS CLOSURES DISCUSSED AT JOINT MEETING**

Recent long term closures of Snoqualmie Pass prompted a meeting between WSDOT, WSP, and members of the Washington Trucking Association (WTA). Mr. Larson coordinated the meeting which was held in Cle Elum on January 28th. Several issues, including better communication, the possibility of more convoys during closures, and improvements to chain-up areas, were discussed. After getting input from everyone present, it was concluded that a better means of communication is more important to the WTA than increased convoys.

### **FILEMAKERPRO FORMS GROWING IN NUMBER**

As of January 1997 the total number of FilemakerPro electronic forms created and distributed for use agency-wide is 215. Check the Forms Catalog (FORMSCAT.FM) for file names and details of all forms. This catalog is updated and redistributed monthly with the new and revised electronic forms.

### **WINTER STORMS POUND OLYMPIC REGION HIGHWAYS**

This winter's holiday storms delivered a one-two punch to Olympic Region highways and have resulted in damages estimated at \$2,569,000. Fifty-three sections of the Region's highways were affected by floods, washouts, slides, downed trees and snow avalanches. Highways most severely impacted included:

- **US 12 Aberdeen Bluffs**

A major slide at the Aberdeen Bluffs covered all four lanes of US 12. A \$260,000 emergency contract was executed for debris removal to open two lanes of the highway. Geotechnical investigations are being done to determine an effective permanent fix.

- **US 101 Hoh River**

Severe bank erosion along the Hoh River is threatening US 101 south of Forks. Estimated costs to replace rip rap and repair culverts is \$580,000. Damage repairs will be done this summer to avoid disturbing fish runs.

- **SR 303 Warren Avenue Bridge**

Undermining of a pier footing on the SR 303 Warren Avenue Bridge resulted in an emergency bridge closure, which severed the main link between downtown and northeast Bremerton. A \$150,000 emergency contract was established to rebuild the washed out slope with rocks and fast-setting concrete to provide support for the pier. Although it was originally thought work would take up to two weeks to complete, Scarsella Brothers, Inc. gave an all-out effort and had the bridge reopened to traffic within four days of the closure.

- **US 101 Lake Crescent**

Unusually high amounts of snowfall drifted into banks measuring up to 16 feet deep along the shores of Lake Crescent on US 101. Maintenance crews from each end of the nine-mile long closed section worked for five days to cut a lane through and open the route to one-way piloted traffic. Conditions were so severe that two blowers were borrowed from the National Parks Service to join with three front-end loaders to accomplish the work.

### **RURAL MOBILITY GRANT PROGRAM TAKING APPLICATIONS**

The Washington State Rural Mobility Committee is currently soliciting applications for the Rural Mobility Grant Program to fund programs and projects for the 1997-1999 biennium. The purpose of the Rural Mobility Grant Program as defined by the committee is to increase and improve access which links people in rural communities to basic services. To be eligible, all projects must serve people residing in a rural community. The state grants can be used for planning, operating, and capital transportation projects that serve rural residents.

For the 1997-1999 biennium, WSDOT has requested \$1.5 million with an option of additional funding for this program. Dependent upon the availability of funds, the department expects to initiate contracts July 1, 1997. All public and private/private non-profit organizations are eligible to apply. There is a limit of two applications per organization. Applications must be submitted by March 12, 1997, to be considered.

#### **AMTRAK/GREYHOUND MEETING FACILITATES COORDINATION**

WSDOT Rail staff traveled to Portland to facilitate a meeting between representatives from Amtrak and Greyhound. The purpose of the meeting was to open communications between the two intercity carriers and to develop coordination opportunities. Discussion focused on schedules, ticket sales, and facilities in support of service in the I-5 corridor. The conversation was cordial and productive, and several new arrangements were tentatively agreed upon.

#### **WSDOT ASSISTING GRANT TRANSIT AUTHORITY IN DEVELOPMENT**

Last November, the citizens of Grant County voted to increase the sales tax to support public transportation. The Grant Transit Authority (GTA) had been the recipient of a Rural Mobility grant to operate a demonstration project in the county. WSDOT Public Transportation Office (PTO) staff had been supporting that demonstration with technical assistance.

The tasks facing the GTA Board changed immediately with the successful election, and the Board requested assistance from WSDOT to prepare for the next phases in the development of transit services. PTO staff assembled a team and scheduled a full day workshop in Moses Lake with the GTA Board. The team worked with the GTA Board to develop a work plan and to provide technical guidance to assist the board as it gears up to implement its new services. Discussion included hiring staff, developing their comprehensive plan, organizing the board, grants, networking, contracting for services, and developing their financial systems.

#### **WSDOT STAFF LEARNS THE MECHANICS OF RIVERS**

The North Central Region offered the second of two "River Mechanics For Highway Design" classes for its maintenance and engineering personnel this month. The course gives an introduction to the mechanics of fluvial systems and showed the interaction between geology, hydrology, and hydraulics, and how and why river systems erode the land around them. Methods of preventing and correcting stream bank erosion were described in detail with actual projects shown as examples.

To assist in the partnering and coordination with other agencies in the environmental issues of highways and rivers, the region opened the classes up to other agencies, consultants, and contractors. The following agencies enthusiastically took advantage of the invitation to participate in this joint training opportunity offered by the region: Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, US Army Corps Engineers, Chelan County, Douglas

County, Okanogan County, Chelan County Public Utility District, US Forest Service, and Natural Resources Conservation Service.

### **OPEN HOUSE MEETINGS HELD IN NORTH CENTRAL REGION**

North Central Region held two open house meetings in January to present design information and obtain public input. The project to replace a grade intersection of highways SR 26 and SR 17 in Adams County with a Diamond Interchange was well received by the 30 plus people attending. The interchange is needed due to the high number of accidents and fatalities in the area. Many folks attending had a story to tell about close calls and were eager to know when construction would begin. Unfortunately, the interchange project is not funded for construction at this time.

The other open house was held in Moses Lake to present proposals to replace two bridges crossing over I-90. The existing bridges at Peninsula Drive and at Division Street need to be replaced to provide adequate vertical clearance for trucks using I-90. The need to raise the city street profiles up to 6 feet to gain the required vertical clearance met resistance from the local landowners attending the meeting. Of the 20 plus people attending, over half felt other options were available.

### **TELECOMMUNICATIONS HEADED TO LIMITED ACCESS RIGHT-OF-WAY**

The Environmental & Engineering Service Center (E&ESC) is coordinating the effort by the Department to allow installation of telecommunications systems on limited access rights-of-way. A very successful meeting with telecommunications industry representatives was held at SeaTac on November 18 to introduce the goals of WSDOT and invite their participation along with our other partners. More than 30 industry representatives attended expressing considerable interest in this proposal. All of the comments heard from those representatives were complimentary for requesting their input.

The WSDOT Telecommunications Policy Group adopted a series of background papers that include the Department's goals in this effort. Those goals are summarized as follows:

- Expand and Enhance WSDOT Intelligent Transportation Systems
- Enhance delivery of Telecommunications across the State
- Open limited access rights-of-way to Telecommunications
- Only authorize consideration for Telecommunication
- Use of rights-of-way
- Tribal Issues

### **FREIGHT MOBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE GOING STRONG**

The Legislative Transportation Committee's Freight Mobility Advisory Committee continued to meet in January, holding meetings of the full committee as well as the working group meetings. Transportation Economic Partnership (TEP) staff continued to provide support to the Department's representatives to the committee, primarily in the area of examining potential freight mobility projects for funding consideration by the FMAC. The regions and Rail Division played important parts in those exercises, responding quickly with suggested lists of potential freight mobility projects and to requests for information and analysis of the impacts of projects.

The original schedule established by the FMAC in the fall has been extended to mid-February. The full committee will meet twice more in February -- on the 7th and 14th -- at

which time the committee's report and recommendations to the Legislature are to be completed.

#### **MORE SR 16/TACOMA NARROWS MEETINGS PLANNED**

Plans are underway for a series of meetings in the SR 16/Tacoma Narrows corridor. The first meetings will be held February 25 in Port Orchard and February 26 in Tacoma to present the methodology for determining an affected project area for the advisory election, still scheduled for November, 1998. Public agencies are invited to attend and the public will also be notified of the meeting. The boundary methodology was created by a team of experts, led by the ECONorthwest firm. The methodology describes how the legislative criteria for establishing the boundaries will be used to determine a recommended geographic boundary. Based upon the initial boundary recommended by the consultants later this year, the Department will invite affected jurisdictions to select a representative to a Local Involvement Committee. This committee will advise the Department on matters related to the advisory ballot.

A second round of public meetings have been scheduled in March at five locations in the SR 16/Tacoma Narrows corridor. The purpose of these meetings is to present the study results on nine alternatives that were chosen after considering 22 alternatives last fall. The range of alternatives include a new parallel span, double decking the existing bridge, Transportation Demand Management and Transportation System Management measures, and transit/ferry alternatives. These meetings will also serve as public scoping meetings for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). A public agency scoping meeting will also be held for the EIS in March.

#### **NEW NORTHBOUND I-5 HOV LANE OPENS**

Last month, carpools and transit customers traveling on southbound Interstate 5 south of Seattle began using three more miles of high-occupancy-vehicle (HOV) lanes between South Spokane Street and the south end of Boeing Field. The new HOV segment almost doubles the length of the current downtown southbound I-5 HOV lane, which begins at the southbound Mercer Street on-ramp, to a total of 7.5 miles.

This new HOV segment is the result of the first of three concurrently active construction projects in which crews are building northbound and southbound HOV lanes between South Spokane Street and Southcenter. The three projects will not only extend existing HOV segments, but will also build a new HOV structure through the Southcenter interchange.

The third project also includes grinding southbound and northbound lanes of I-5 between South Lucile Street and Southcenter. Grinding will help smooth the roadway surface and eliminate ruts. This work, which is expected to begin in early April, will require multiple day and night lane closures for grinding and panel-replacement activities. The work will occur seven days a week for up to three months.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS INVITED ON PROPOSED SPEED LIMIT CHANGES**

The speed limit would be raised to 60 mph on portions of several state highways under a proposal announced by the Washington State Department of Transportation.

The locations are **U.S. 2** between the State Route 204 interchange and Roosevelt Road in Monroe, **State Route 20** from east of Newhalem to Granite Creek, **State Route 204** from the U.S. 2 interchange to one-half mile west of Frontier Village, **State Route 520** between the old toll booth plaza and the State Route 202 junction, **State Route 522** between the Interstate 405 and State Route 9 interchanges, and **State Route 526** between

Boeing Access Road (Paine Field) and the Interstate 5 interchange. The changes are planned to go into effect in April.

Many factors were taken into consideration in developing the new speeds, including: prevailing vehicle speeds (or the 85th percentile speed), physical features of the highway, traffic volumes (congestion), segment accident histories, enforcement and air quality. The new speed limits were also submitted to regional transportation planning agencies to ensure that the changes conform to federal air quality mandates.

### **NEW BRIDGE OVER SR 12 OPENS IN RECORD TIME**

The new Naches River Bridge near the junction of SR 12 and SR 410 that replaces the bridge that was damaged during the February 96 flood, was opened to traffic on January 27, 1997. The new two-lane bridge is 327 feet long and 40 feet wide. Construction started in July 1996 and would have been complete before Christmas if it weren't for all the early snow in November and December. This quick work can be attributed to numerous factors: Efficient Bridge Office staff, permitting issues that were resolved on site, and design issues made and then adhered to with no subsequent changes.

With the opening of the new bridge, the 80,000 pound load limit was also lifted. The limit was in place while motorists used a temporary Bailey bridge that will be dismantled. Crews will also begin removing the old damaged bridge.

The cost of the new bridge was \$2.5 million, all in emergency funds from the Federal Highway Administration. The contractor was Weaver Construction Company of LaGrande, Oregon.

### **WSDOT EARNED ITS STRIPES DURING WINTER STORM '96**

During a disaster event, WSDOT's first responsibility is to protect the infrastructure and provide safety to the traveling public during disasters. WSDOT's next responsibility is to support the Washington State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. The Department is responsible for coordinating all disaster transportation missions (Air, Marine, Rail, Public Transit, and the use of the Highway System). **Immediate Action** includes traffic control; temporary detours; debris clean-up; information to the traveling public; and damage assessment. **Permanent Action** includes debris removal; slope stabilization; erosion control; temporary detour removal; re-vegetation for soil erosion control; and permanent repairs.

The Department provides support to local governments, state agencies, federal agencies and Indian Tribes. During the December 1996 snow/ice and flood disaster, the Department:

1. Sent snow blowers and plows and crews to Whatcom County to rescue stranded motorists during the snow storm (blizzard conditions)
2. Arranged for a special ferry run to move five snow plows to San Juan County. The Department provided plows and crews to move snow to allow emergency crews to reach isolated people (mostly elderly) to move them to shelters during the snow storm and power outage
3. Made two special runs moving emergency PUD trucks and crews from Eastern Washington to Western Washington over White Pass by snow plowing one lane for access during the height of the storm

4. Arranged for the movement of sandbags from Snohomish County to Kitsap County using our ferries
5. Provided barricades, cones and other traffic control equipment to Thurston County to assist in road closures
6. Provided equipment and operators to small communities in Kittitas County to remove snow to allow for emergency vehicle access
7. Through the Aviation Division, flew 10 reconnaissance and search and rescue missions statewide

The snow and ice storm that affected the entire state began on December 26, 1996, and for four days, snow accumulations ranged from 18 inches in the Seattle area, 30 inches in the Bellingham area, 40 inches on the west side of the Cascades, to a foot in Spokane. Beginning the fifth day of the snow and ice storm, the "Pineapple Express" hit the state and for the next two days as much as four inches of rain fell accelerating the snow melting and causing rivers and streams to exceed their banks throughout the state. All train service was closed in the state for approximately four days. All Mountain Passes from Eastern Washington to Western Washington and SR 14 along the Columbia Gorge were closed for up to four days. At one time, 30 State Routes were closed. Governor Lowry declared a Proclamation of Emergency for 37 counties (18 Western Washington 19 Eastern Washington). Vice President Gore flew to Washington to assess storm damage and left behind \$5 million for initial repair work to begin. More funds will be allocated once estimates in damage can be completed.

Under the FHWA ER Program, the cost of the damages for WSDOT is \$10,000,000; for Cities and Counties the cost is \$29,000,000. Under FEMA, the cost of the damages for WSDOT is \$115,000 (which does not include any snow and ice assistance that may become eligible from FEMA); for Cities and Counties (Roads) the cost is \$3,129,740; and for Cities and Counties (Other) the cost is \$35,100,778. The total disaster amount for public facilities is \$77,345,518.

#### **CONTRACT ADS AND AWARDS**

December 1996 bids were opened on three preservation projects for a total of three new contracts. The total engineer's estimate was \$15,483,162, with total bids of \$14,313,923, or 7.55 percent below the estimate. There were 200 uncompleted contracts with a total work-in-progress dollar value of \$1,084,062,188.57.

#### **WSDOT ASKED TO PILOT GRANT CONSOLIDATING PROGRAM**

WSDOT has been approached by FTA and FHWA to be a pilot state for Consolidating the Planning Grants (CPG) for the MPOs. In January, the MPO/RTPO Steering Committee met to determine if WSDOT and the MPOs were interested. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Steering Committee developed a proposed CPG that it will recommend to the full MPO Coordinating Committee in early March for adoption. The proposed CPG will only apply to MPO planning grants and includes eight items that will improve and simplify the administration of these funds.

#### **URBAN MOBILITY WORKING DILIGENTLY ON KINGDOME MOU**

Office of Urban Mobility (OUM) continues to work on FTA's and FHWA's comments on the Environmental Assessment for the Kingdome Area Intermodal Access Project, and is meeting with them to finalize a response. The document should be returned to FTA/FHWA the first week in February. Even with this delay, OUM is still looking to apply for federal funds sometime in April. OUM is also reworking the Memorandum of Understanding

(MOU) that defines the project for the six partners, to include the framework of the funding for the cost sharing for the design phase. Because the STP grant won last year covers all design costs, OUM is under no crunch to get the MOU signed.

### **1997-99 PROGRAM OF RESEARCH PROJECTS APPROVED**

The Research Executive Committee (REC) met and gave final approval to a program of research projects for the 1997-1999 Biennium. The program addresses three potential funding levels: \$3.3 million, a continuation of the current biennium funding; \$4.3 million as reflected in the Current Law Budget; and \$5.3 million as reflected in the Agency Request Budget. A balanced and productive program, addressing relevant needs in each technical area, requires the funding level reflected in the Agency Request. However, the REC approved the highest priority projects possible at each of the two lower levels as well.

### **CONCRETE BEING PUT TO THE TOUGHNESS TEST ON SR 18 BRIDGE**

High performance concrete is the focus of a recent project that analyzes the use of higher-strength, more durable concrete on a specific bridge on SR 18 near Auburn. FHWA has provided \$280,000 to analyze the materials and structural design issues related to this improved material, and to document experiences with this particular bridge. The department will share that experience and knowledge with neighboring state DOT's, local government agencies, consultants, contractors, suppliers, fabricators in Washington and neighboring states, and academics who train future engineering professionals. A seminar is planned for August 18-20 in Bellevue to begin this information sharing and to initiate discussion and feedback, especially from the private sector contractors and suppliers. Preliminary analysis indicates that through the use of high performance concrete, cost savings will be realized both in initial construction and in subsequent maintenance and refurbishment costs over the life of the bridge. FHWA leads this effort, while the research component is led by the University of Washington.

### **PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES ABUNDANT IN THE MONTH OF JANUARY**

WSDOT's Geotechnical Services had a record 758 aerial negatives taken in 15.7 hours of flying time during the 4 days of clear skies in the month of January. A number of mud slides and washouts statewide were also photographed during January. Mud and slide photography was accomplished under challenging conditions, with low overcast skies and rough air. Staff provided crisis response to the Woodway Slide - conducting flight photography, film processing, and final print delivery to the customer in 24 hours.

### **WSDOT'S AVIATION ASSISTS WITH INSPECTIONS FROM THE AIR**

The Aviation Division's "Huey" helicopter and Pilot Newell Lee were called for assistance during the January storm and floods. Two missions were flown, the first to allow City of Seattle Engineers to inspect slide areas in West Seattle, Alki Point, Magnolia, along I-5 near the Convention Center and in North Seattle. In addition to the city's engineers, geologists from the Departments of Natural Resources and Ecology were also on board. Flight two carried just the geologists for an inspection of slide areas along the sound.

### **WEB SURFERS CAN FIND "STIP" IN CYBERSPACE**

The 700-page Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is now on TransAid's Internet web pages. The STIP lists over 3500 funded transportation projects throughout the state for Fiscal Year 97-99. Because the STIP is so large (and potentially cumbersome on some computer systems), it has been divided by county, MPO, and WSDOT projects only. The STIP documents were prepared for the Internet using the PDF format - local agencies wishing to access it will do so through Adobe Acrobat software.



Adobe allows users to view and search the documents but doesn't allow them to be modified.

### **RESEARCH REPORT A PRODUCT OF AGENCY COOPERATION**

TransAid has developed and distributed a research report entitled *Evaluation of Automated Pavement Distress Data Collection Procedures for Local Agency Pavement Management*, financed through an innovative cooperative agreement between many public agencies in both Washington and Oregon.

The research report was written over the course of a 1 1/2 year study which will assist local agencies in determining the correct pavement distress data collection procedure to employ for use with their PMS. The study is very unique in that a cooperative arrangement between Oregon and Washington was established to conduct the research. Initially, a committee was formed by the two states to evaluate not only automated distress data collection, but other data features, such as, Global position systems, video logging of street signs, and ground penetrating radar.

### **HERITAGE CORRIDOR PROGRAM REPRESENTED AT SYMPOSIUM**

The Heritage Corridor Program (HCP) provided a booth at this year's Fish and Wildlife Congress at The Evergreen State College. The two-day event in January was a symposium where hunters, biologists, birders and other wildlife enthusiasts joined together to discuss ways for Washington to preserve its biodiversity. The HCP booth was very well received and had over two hundred interested queries for information and materials. The Marine Wildlife in the Puget Sound poster, Heritage in the Making brochure, Defining Washington report, and Scenic & Recreational maps were distributed to interested parties. The display highlighted the Department's efforts educate the traveling public about heritage resources located on or adjacent to Scenic & Recreational Highways.

### **SCENIC ROUTES SELECTED FOR BYWAY DEDICATION MARKER AWARDS**

The Heritage Corridors Advisory Committee project team met on January 28 to evaluate applications and select routes to receive scenic byway dedication markers. SR12, Snake River to Walla Walla, and SR14, Columbia River Gorge, were selected.

### **QUALITY ITEMS:**

#### **QUALITY COMMITTEE CREATING A "LEARNING ORGANIZATION"**

The Planning & Programming Service Center (P&PSC) Q-Steering Committee held a meeting to specifically focus on defining and creating a "learning organization". It brainstormed characteristics of such an organization and selected the five primary characteristics it would like to pursue in the service center over the next year. Those five items were then presented to the P&PSC Management Team at its weekly staff meeting, where five managers volunteered to each take one of the characteristics and coordinate a natural work group of other P&PSC volunteers to identify ways to make that characteristic a prominent component of the Service Center environment. A letter has been sent out by the Assistant Secretary encouraging staff to volunteer for participation in these natural work groups.

#### **REPORT SHOWS QUALITY ABOUNDS IN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY OFFICE**

FHWA's 1996 Management Review Report on WSDOT's DBE Program was received with the following commendations in various areas for the Office of Equal Opportunity:

- Efforts to improve “Quality” in Civil Rights Program areas, as exemplified by the establishment of the Legal Requirements Quality Team. The establishment of the Legal Requirements Quality Team, charged with improving the quality, efficiency and timeliness of the processes of external civil rights, is a prime example of the State’s commitment toward continuous improvement.
- Commitment to revising its DBE Plan to provide clearer operating direction in the External Civil Rights area.
- Efforts to pursue sanctions, where appropriate.
- Action to improve communications with the WSDOT Regions to ensure that CUF matters are investigated in a more timely manner.
- Initiation of the process to conduct a statewide DBE Disparity Study.

While this review confirmed many positive accomplishments made by WSDOT, it also disclosed several critical areas requiring immediate attention.

## **GOOD NEWS ITEMS:**

### **WSDOT “EYES” WATCH OVER THE NARROWS BRIDGE**

Olympic Region, assisted by Management Information Services (MIS) Infrastructure Planning Services, coordinated the acquisition and installation of a new traffic surveillance camera at the Narrows Bridge near the Jackson Avenue exit and will be joined by a second camera on the west end of the bridge in April. With this new equipment in place, Olympic Radio operators will be able to quickly spot problems on the bridge and send out response teams to scenes with appropriate sources and equipment.

The surveillance camera uses new technology designed to operate over much slower speeds and over leased telecommunications circuits rather than microwave and fiber. This feature is necessary due to the distance from the Traffic System Management Center (TSMC) located in Parkland to the camera location on the bridge. (Neither fiber optics nor microwave are a cost effective medium at that long distance.)

Upon successful completion of the pilot, this may prove to be a cost effective means to extend the TSMC video surveillance capability to other regions where fiber optics and microwave are either not available or are cost prohibitive.

### **DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS GETTING BIG BANG FOR THE BUCK**

Thanks to efforts of the Olympic Region Planning Office’s five-member Development Services Team, the citizens of Washington gained \$1,250,000 worth developer-funded highway improvements in 1996. The team reviews SEPA documents for all seven of the Region’s counties and numerous cities and towns. Improvement projects resulting from 15 Developer Agreements that were executed last year ranged from adding a simple right-turn pocket to major intersection reconstruction, including signals and channelization. The Development Services Team is funded at \$225,000 for 1996 which, when balanced against the value of developer funded improvements captured, translates to a 5.5:1 return on the dollar.

### **NEW SR 509 CORRIDOR OPENED TO TRAFFIC**

On January 22 the new SR 509 corridor, connecting northeast Tacoma to the downtown area, was opened to traffic -- on time and under budget. The new route will provide motorists with a safer, more efficient highway without delays from bridge openings and frequent rail crossings, and will allow the Port of Tacoma and Puyallup Tribe to develop properties on the Upper Blair Waterway. During a public ceremony, Congressman Norm Dicks and Representative Ruth Fisher, along with representatives of the Tribe, FHWA, WSDOT, City and Port, touted the \$165 million project as a cornerstone for the rebirth of downtown Tacoma, a key to economic vitality for the region, and an example of the goals that can be reached when all are willing to work as partners.

### **HAVE VANS WILL TRAVEL**

In an ongoing effort to meet the needs of customers, Community Transit (CT) has entered into a Short-Term Vanpool Rental contract with WSDOT. Under this contract, CT took delivery in early January of four mini- vans. These vans will be issued to groups of six or seven ridesharing commuters.

CT's vanpool program has grown considerably during the past five years. As reported in the 1995 Public Transportation Systems Summary, the number of CT vans in operation in 1991 was 45 compared to 128 in 1996. CT currently has 14 groups formed and waiting for vans!

### **COMMUTER CHALLENGE PRESENTS DIAMOND AWARDS**

On January 15, 1996, the Commuter Challenge program hosted its annual Diamond Awards banquet to honor organizations which have made outstanding and innovative efforts to reduce employee commuting beyond what is required by the state Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) program. Jim Slakey, Chair of the state CTR Task Force, and Task Force member Stu Clark presented the awards.

The winners were selected from among approximately 480 King County worksites affected by the CTR law. Another 150 organizations received recognition as "Pacesetters" - organizations that have made a demonstrated commitment to achieving the goals of the CTR program.

An advertising campaign recognizing the accomplishments of the 15 Diamond Award winners will run throughout 1997 in King County business publications and on Metro bus signs. The campaign theme is "Thank you for not going the extra mile."

### **SURVEY SHOWCASES THE BEST FEATURES OF SR 14**

An "Historic Highway Features Survey" of SR 14 through the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area has been completed as part of the SR 14 Management Plan. The survey identifies by mile post significant roadway features and features near the highway right-of-way that define SR 14's unique scenic and cultural character. Partnership agencies have indicated they are pleased and impressed with the depth and scope of the information. The report cites early explorers, early farms and ranches, a stagecoach road built by soldiers in the Yakama Indian Wars, sections of the old North Bank highway, a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp, Fort Cascades, a "Golden Spike" ceremony, a rock corral built in 1870, historic Indian fishing sites, portages of the Oregon Trail settlers, the rock walls of the Dalles Wallah-Wallah Military Road and more. Information from the report will be used to develop Design Guidelines for SR 14 in the Columbia River Gorge.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS RECEIVES EXCELLENCE AWARD**

In November, the Environmental Affairs Office entered the competition for the FHWA Environmental Excellence Awards, a nationwide biennial award for projects or processes that make an outstanding contribution to transportation and the environment. WSDOT captured the Distinguished Environmental Achievement Award in Environmental Research

for the work done in studying the effects of ferry terminals and operations on marine resources and developing an effective mitigation plan for the Clinton Terminal. WSDOT will be honored at the 1997 Environmental Excellence Award Ceremony on April 22.

### **QUALITY COPYING MADE EASIER WITH "COLORBUS" COMPUTER**

The WSDOT Design Office purchased a new Colorbus computer that will connect customers directly to the copier from their workstations. The Colorbus will store the printed job in a "completed" queue until the file is deleted. The Fiery computer that was connected to the old color copier did not store the jobs after printing; once they printed they were gone. When it was necessary to reprint a job, the customer had to resend the job from their workstation. The Colorbus computer also differs from the Fiery computer in that it allows the manipulation of a customer's job directly from the Design Office's end. Among the items that can be changed are the number of copies and some of the color attributes. Individual pages can also be selected to print.

### **STEVENS PASS GREENWAY RECEIVES FEDERAL GRANT**

The Federal Highway Administration has awarded \$128,000 to the Stevens Pass Greenway to complete the development of a corridor management plan between Monroe and Wenatchee along U.S. 2. Public involvement will be a major element of the plan.

The grant, one of six totaling \$539,464 throughout the state, was announced in December. The grants are used to fund projects under the federal Scenic Byways Program.

### **WSDOT / RTA COLLABORATION TEAM FORMED**

A new WSDOT "early collaboration and coordination team" is being formed in downtown Seattle to integrate the Regional Transit Authority's "Sound Move" project with WSDOT's highway, intercity rail, and ferry programs. The team will work over the next six months with the RTA as their Capital and Service Implementation Plan is developed and a WSDOT/RTA Interlocal Agreement is prepared. These documents will set the course for the next 10-year implementation period.

The team will address emerging issues such as the timing and scope for:

- RTA HOV direct access ramps and express bus service with WSDOT's Core HOV Lane program
- RTA Commuter Rail (Lakewood to Everett) with WSDOT's Intercity Rail program (Portland to Vancouver, B.C.)
- RTA Commuter Rail with WSDOT's King Street Station improvements and maintenance base proposals
- RTA Commuter Rail with WSDOT's ferry terminal improvements at Edmonds and Mukilteo
- RTA Electric Light Rail with WSDOT's I-5, I-90 and other state route rights of way
- RTA HOV direct access and express bus service with WSDOT's I-90 Express Lane operation
- RTA HOV direct access and express bus service with WSDOT's Public-Private Park & Ride Lot proposal

This team is an early response by the department to collaboratively plan with RTA the delivery of the RTA and WSDOT programs. During this time recommendations as to how the department is formally organized to best work with the RTA project will be established.

### **WSDOT HOSTS KICKOFF FOR RIDESHARE INFORMATION SIGNS**

In early January at Colman Dock, Secretary Morrison unveiled the first of over 600 new signs promoting the central Puget Sound region's new rideshare information "Hotline."

Commuters calling 1-888-814-1300 are quickly routed to the transit/rideshare agency in their home county to receive assistance in finding others for sharing rides and to obtain vanpool information. The new signs will be on highways and arterials throughout the region. A coordinated public information campaign is currently underway. The Office of Urban Mobility is managing this project for its partner transportation agencies.

#### **WSDOT TELECONFERENCES TO TRB MEETING**

The Transportation Research Board (TRB) Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C. was held January 12-16. Commissioner Linda Tompkins attended, as did a small number of WSDOT managers and technical staff. This year, on a trial basis, a small number of sessions were available through teleconferencing. WSDOT was one of six states to participate in this trial, which was reasonably successful. Several WSDOT staff observed these sessions and participated in the question and answer sessions. Research staff will work with MIS and TRB to improve the system and hopefully make more sessions available to interested staff throughout the department in the future.

#### **WAC MODIFICATION FOR AERIAL SEARCH & RESCUE APPROVED**

Modification of WAC 468-200, The Conduct of Aerial Search And Rescue, was approved at a hearing on the 13th of January. The WAC details how aerial search and rescue will be managed by the State. The entire Search and Rescue community participated in the WAC process which began in 1995. Statewide meetings were held to get input on the WAC before it went to hearing and was adopted in January of 1996. Modifications to the WAC were developed through an outreach effort to the Search and Rescue community to clarify several areas.

#### **AUDIT OFFICE STAFF TO REPRESENT WSDOT AT ALASKA DOT**

Rich Gleckler from WSDOT's Audit Office has been selected as the AASHTO Alaska peer review team leader to review the Alaska DOT Audit function. This peer review is an on-going process involving a majority of states throughout the nation that review their audit functions in a continuous improvement effort. Rich is coordinating with auditors from Idaho and Oregon who will also participate in the review.

#### **WSDOT/OREGON BICYCLING COMMITTEES HOLD JOINT MEETING**

For the first time in its twelve year history, the WSDOT Bicycling Advisory Committee met with the Oregon Bicycling Advisory Committee. The Oregon committee was able to join WSDOT's committee for a three hour meeting. Discussion focused on the committee goals and objectives, structure, and operating procedures. Both committees also expressed interest regarding bicycles in the Columbia River Gorge and bicycle access to Columbia River Bridges and bicycle issues in the Vancouver-Portland metro area.

#### **CUSTER NORTHBOUND REST AREA UNVEILS INFORMATION SIGNS**

In early January 1997, Heritage Corridors Program, in partnership with the vendor STOREYCO and Northwest Region Area 1 Maintenance, installed the first in a series of ADA accessible traveler information signs. The sign program is intended to provide basic traveler information at all safety rest areas. Funding for the signs is based on a rent credit with STOREYCO. The signs provide much needed information and will also provide an opportunity to feature nearby communities heritage and recreational resources. Local Chambers of Commerce, Visitor Information Centers, and local officials participated in the development of the signs.

